

2013 TDOT Statewide Customer Survey

Executive Summary

Purpose

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) completed its second comprehensive customer survey in 2013; the first survey was conducted in 2006. The purpose of the survey was to help TDOT identify and prioritize the transportation services and improvements that are most important to Tennesseans and to assess overall performance. The results of the survey will also be used to assist in agency strategic planning and as input into the state long range transportation plan, which is currently being updated.

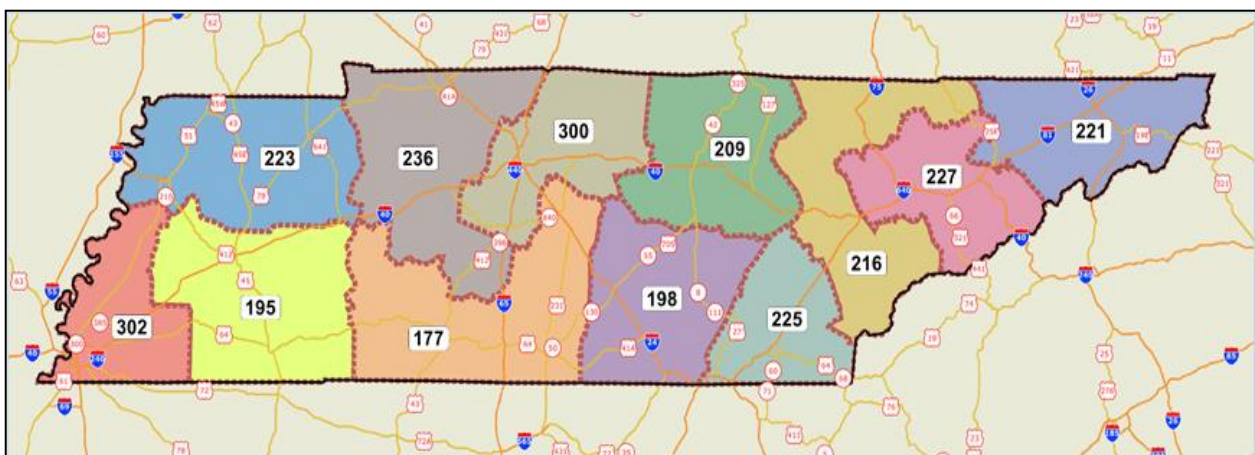
Methodology

During November 2013 through January 2014, TDOT conducted four surveys: (1) a survey of elected officials, (2) a survey of partners, (3) a survey of residents, and (4) a benchmarking survey of residents who live in the eight states that border Tennessee. The purpose of the surveys was to objectively assess customer satisfaction with TDOT's performance and to determine the relative importance that should be placed on issues that were identified during the stakeholder interviews. The methodology for each survey is briefly described below.

- *Survey of Elected Officials.* The survey of elected officials was designed to obtain input from elected officials including city and county mayors and state legislators. The survey was administered by a combination of mail, phone, and the Internet. The goal was to obtain a total of 300 completed surveys. The actual number of completed surveys was 333 with a response rate of 62% (333 of 532 responded). The overall results of the statewide sample have a precision of at least +/- 4.0% at the 95% level of confidence.

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- Survey of Partners. The survey of partners was designed to obtain input from non-elected representatives of organizations that “partner” with TDOT, including: city government staff, county government staff, Rural Planning Organization (RPO) staff, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff, chamber officials, transit agency representatives and rail, freight, and airport officials. The survey was administered by a combination of mail, phone, and the Internet. The goal was to obtain a total of 400 completed surveys. The actual number of completed surveys was 454 with a response rate of nearly 50%. The overall results of the partner sample have a precision of at least +/- 4.0% at the 95% level of confidence.
- Resident Survey. The resident survey was administered to a stratified random sample of 2,729 Tennessee residents. The sample was stratified to ensure the completion of at least 175 surveys in each of the 12 TDOT Construction/Maintenance Super Districts. The seven-page survey was mailed to a random sample of 8,000 households. Approximately seven days after the surveys were mailed, residents who received the survey were contacted by phone. Those who indicated that they had not returned the survey by mail or completed the online version were given the option of completing it by phone. A total of 2,729 households completed surveys which represents a response rate of 34%. The overall results of the statewide sample have a precision of at least +/- 2.0% at the 95% level of confidence. There were no statistically significant differences in the results of the survey based on the method of administration (phone, mail or Internet). To better understand how well TDOT services are being delivered in specific areas of the state, ETC Institute geocoded the home address of respondents to the survey. The map below shows the number of respondents per TDOT Construction/Maintenance Super District.



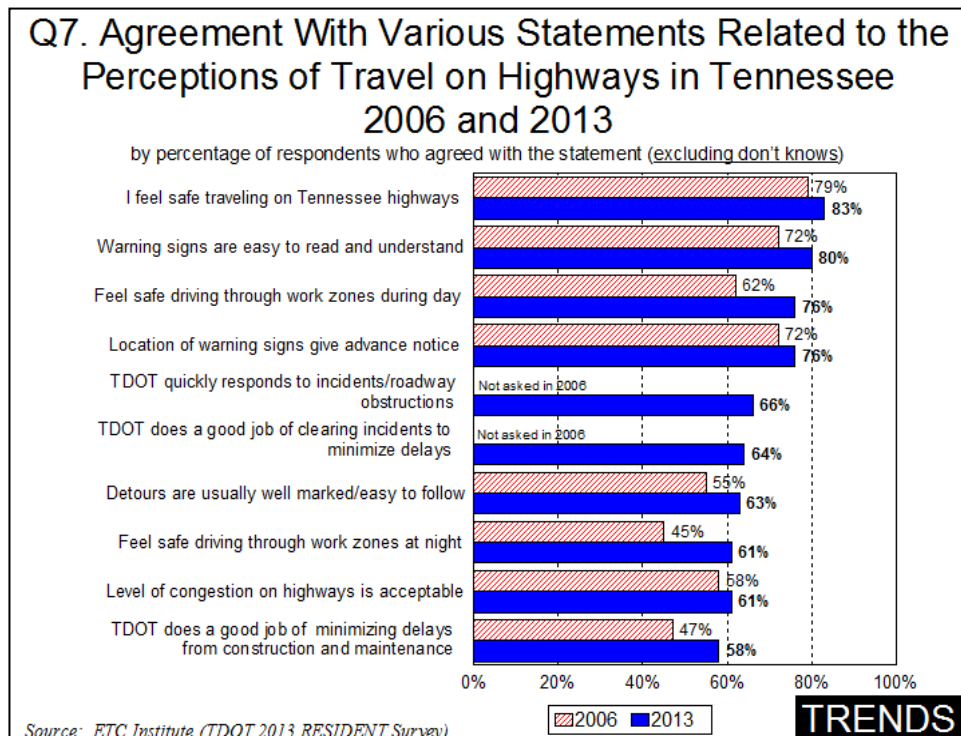
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- **Benchmarking Surveys.** In addition to the surveys that were administered to residents and elected officials, ETC Institute also administered a benchmarking survey to 400 residents in the eight states that border Tennessee: North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. Approximately 50 surveys were administered to a random sample of residents in each of the bordering states. The purpose of the survey was to have residents in bordering states rate the quality of transportation services in the state where they live to assess whether or not the quality of service provided by TDOT was better, worse, or about the same as other Departments of Transportation. The overall results of the benchmarking survey have a precision of at least +/-5% at the 95% level of confidence.

Major Findings

Perceptions of Travel Safety on Tennessee Highways Has Improved Significantly.

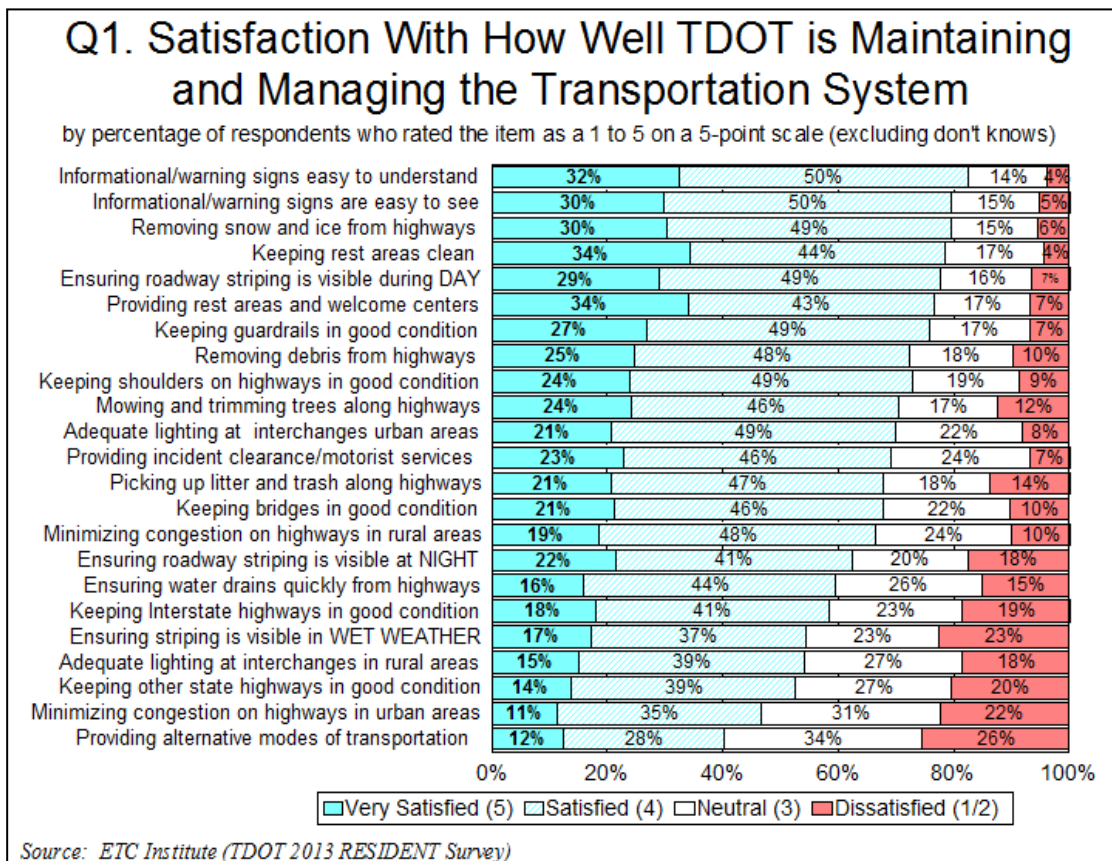
The overall feeling of safety while traveling on Tennessee highways increased 4% among residents, from 79% in 2006 to 83% in 2013. In addition, the feeling of safety when driving through work zones at night increased 16% from 45% in 2006 to 61% in 2013 and the feeling of safety driving through work zones during the day increased 14% from 62% in 2006 to 76% in 2013.



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Safety ratings in Tennessee were higher compared to the ratings in neighboring states. The percentage of residents who felt safe while traveling on Tennessee highways was 10% higher than the average of neighboring states (83% TDOT vs. 73% Surrounding DOTs). The percentage of residents who felt safe traveling through work zones during the day was also 10% higher than the average of neighboring states (76% TDOT vs. 66% Surrounding DOTs).

Satisfaction with TDOT's Efforts to Maintain and Manage the State Highway System Is High. As the chart below shows, residents were generally satisfied with how well TDOT is maintaining and managing the transportation system in Tennessee. The services that residents were most satisfied with, based upon the combined percentage of residents who were "very satisfied" or "satisfied," were: ensuring that informational and warning signs were easy to understand (82%), ensuring that informational and warning signs were easy to see (80%), removing snow and ice from highways (79%), keeping rest areas clean (78%), ensuring roadway striping is visible during the day (78%), providing rest areas and welcome centers (77%) and keeping guardrails in good condition (76%).

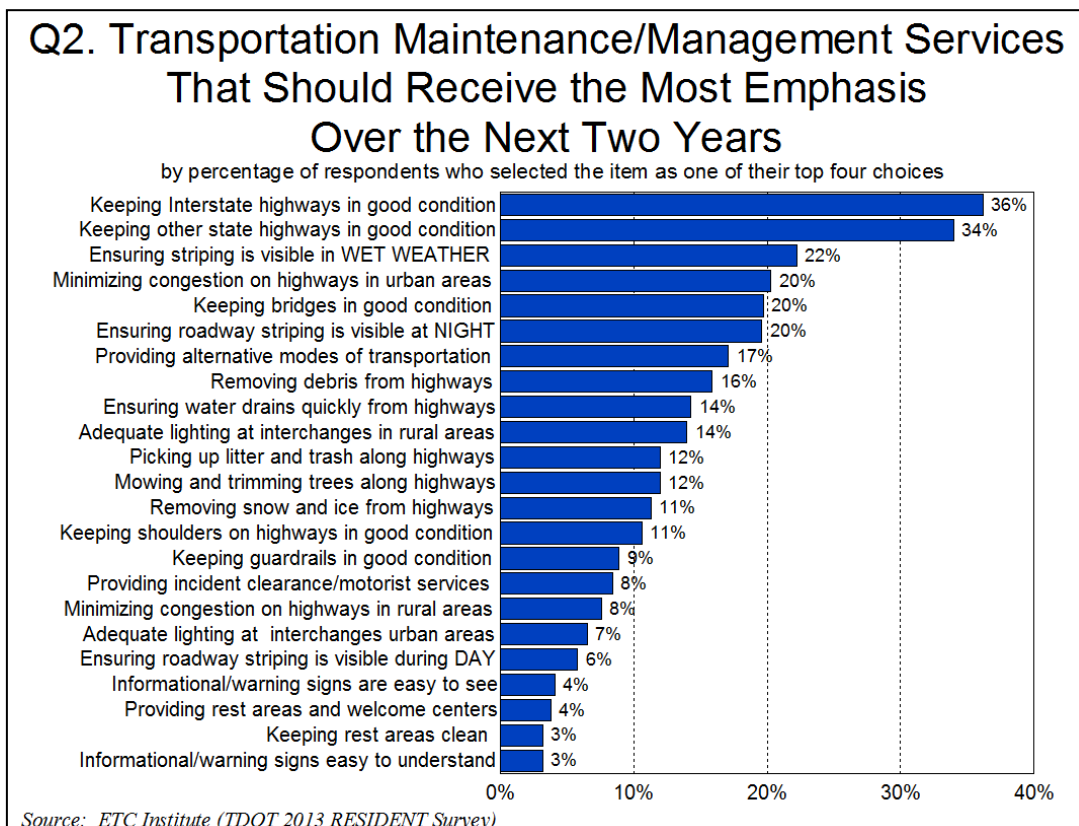


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TDOT scored at or above neighboring DOTs in nearly all of the maintenance and management services that were rated. The areas where TDOT rated significantly above the average for surrounding DOTs (5% or more above the average) were: removing snow and ice from highways (+19%), keeping rest areas clean (+18%), removing debris from highways (+15%), picking up litter and trash along highways (+13%), providing rest areas and welcome centers (+12%), providing incident clearance/motorist services (+12%), keeping shoulders on highways in good condition (+11%), keeping other state highways in good condition (+10%), keeping the surface of Interstate highways in good condition (+9%), minimizing congestion on highways in rural areas (7%) and keeping guardrails in good condition (7%).

Although Satisfaction with TDOT'S Performance Is High, Satisfaction Has Decreased in Some of the Most Important Aspects of the State's Highway System.

The maintenance and management services that showed significant decreases in satisfaction ratings from 2006 to 2013 were: providing adequate lighting at highway interchanges in rural areas (-13%), keeping bridges in good condition (-8%) and keeping Interstate highways in good condition (-3%). These same three areas were also rated within the top five maintenance/management services that residents felt were most important for TDOT to emphasize over the next two years (see chart below).



Tennessee is Trailing Other States in the Quality and Availability of Non-Automotive Transportation. TDOT rated below the average of neighboring DOTs in all of the non-automotive service areas that were rated. The areas where TDOT rated significantly below the average (5% or more below the average) were: providing park and ride facilities (-13%), proximity to public transportation services (-11%), availability of public transportation services (-11%), frequency of public transportation services (-10%), availability of pedestrian facilities and sidewalks for transportation purposes along highways (-8%) and availability of biking facilities and lanes along highways (-5%).

Repairing and Maintaining Existing Highways Is the Top Transportation Priority for Residents, Elected Officials, and Partners. The top five transportation investment priorities among residents, elected officials and partners are listed in the table below. As noted, repairing and maintaining existing highways was the top priority for all three groups.

Rank	Residents	Partners	Elected Officials
1	Maintaining Existing Highways	Maintaining Existing Highways	Maintaining Existing Highways
2	Relieving Congestion	Relieving Congestion	Building New Highways
3	Addressing Commercial Truck Traffic	Building New Highways	Relieving Congestion
4	Expanding Public Transportation	Expanding Public Transportation	Expanding Public Transportation
5	Addressing Mobility Needs for Seniors	Addressing Commercial Truck Traffic	Adding Shoulders

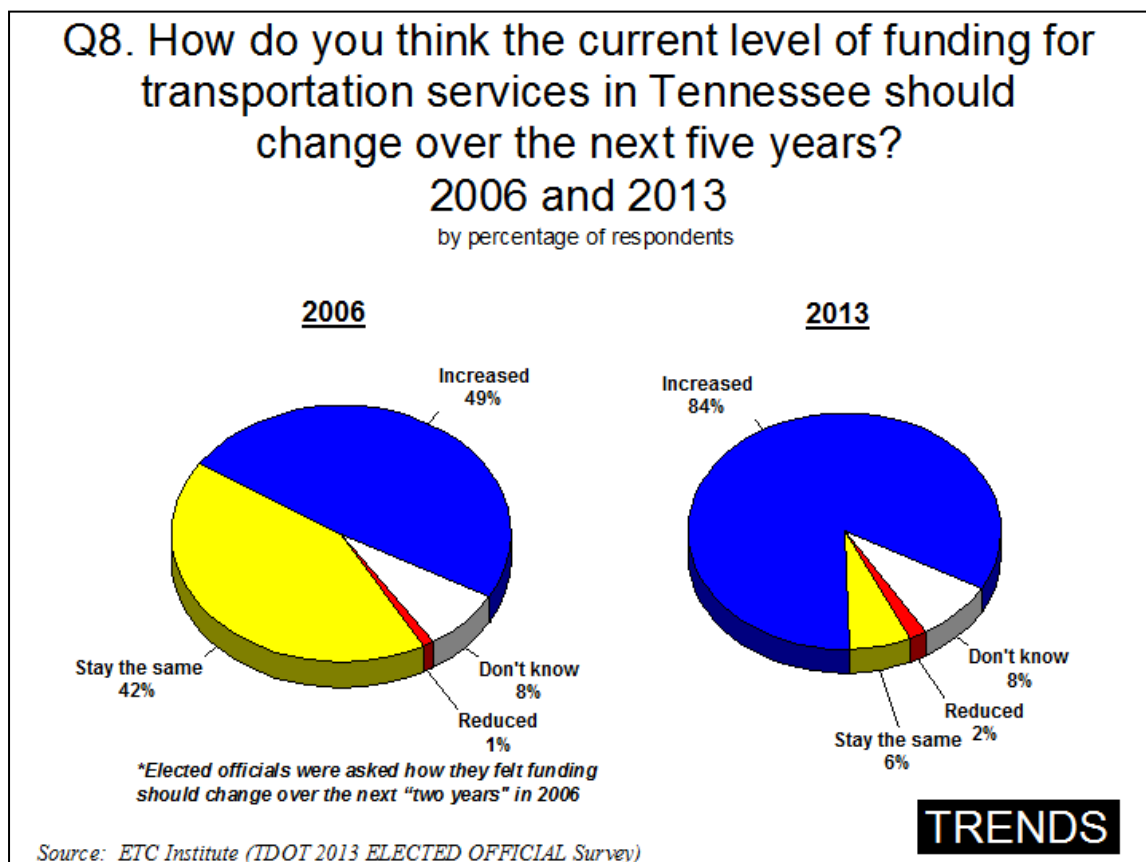
TDOT Is Setting the Standard for the Value Customers Think They Receive Relative to the Taxes They Pay. Residents, elected officials and partners were asked to rate the value of TDOT services relative to the taxes paid. Three-fourths (75%) of the residents surveyed felt they received a “good value” (33%) or “okay value” (42%) for the transportation taxes they pay; the percentage of residents who felt they received a “good value” for the transportation taxes they pay was 20% higher than the average for surrounding DOTs.

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In addition, most (91%) of the elected officials surveyed felt residents received a “good value” (61%) or “okay value” (30%) for the transportation taxes paid and most (92%) of the partners surveyed felt residents received a “good value” (54%) or “okay value” (38%) for the transportation taxes paid.

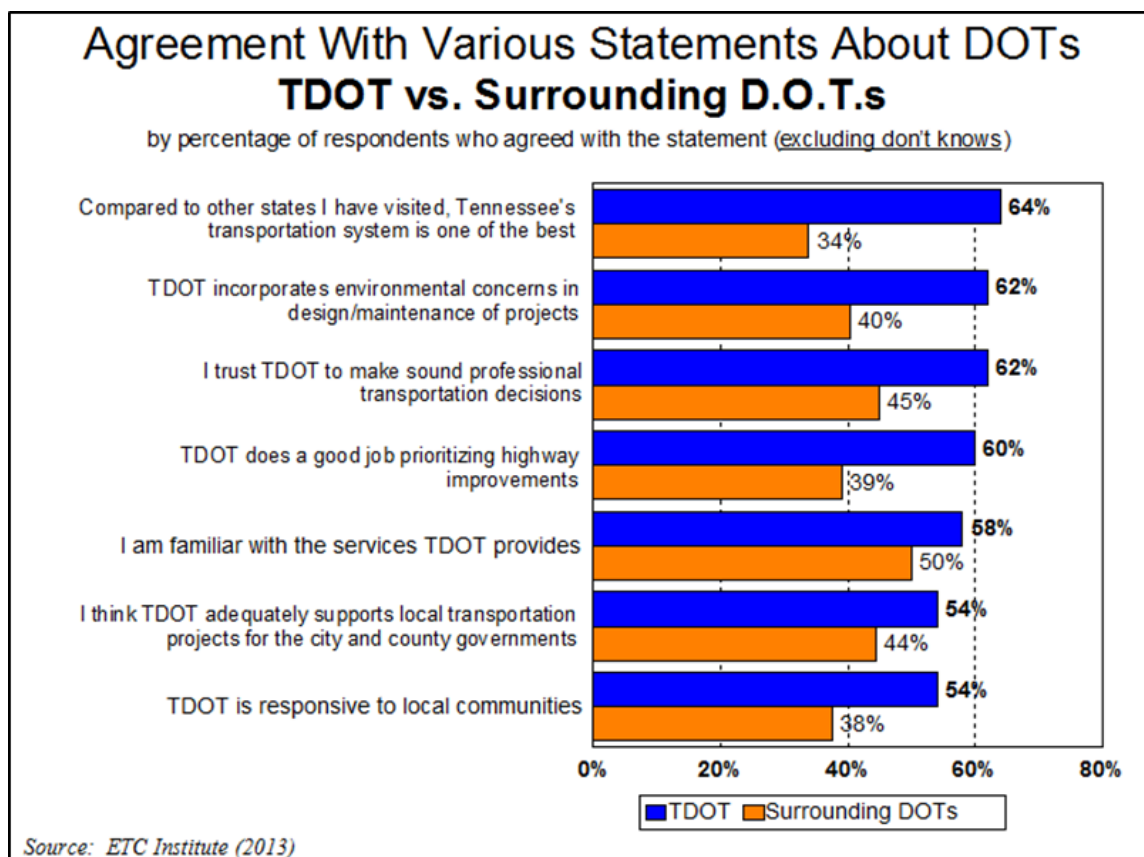
Survey Results Indicate that Residents and Leaders May Be Willing to Pay More to Support Transportation in Tennessee. Residents, elected officials and partners were asked to indicate how they felt funding for transportation services in Tennessee should change over the next five years. The results showed that sixty-percent (60%) of the residents surveyed felt funding for transportation should increase, 84% of elected officials felt transportation funding should increase and 86% of partners felt transportation funding should increase over the next five years.

When analyzing the long-term trends, the percentage of residents who felt funding should increase nearly doubled from 31% in 2006 to 60% in 2013. The percent of elected officials who felt funding should increase over the next five years also increased from 49% in 2006 to 84% in 2013 (see chart below; please note that trends for the Partner survey are not shown because the Partner survey was not conducted in 2006).



TDOT Is Building a Great Brand. Residents were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements related to TDOT's overall performance in providing transportation services. The ratings for TDOT were significantly higher than the ratings for the surrounding DOTs in all of the areas rated; the most notable findings are outlined below:

- Compared to other states I have visited, Tennessee's transportation system is one of the best (64% TDOT vs. 34% Surrounding DOTs)
- TDOT incorporates environmental concerns into the design and maintenance of transportation projects (62% TDOT vs. 40% Surrounding DOTs)
- TDOT does a good job prioritizing highway improvements (60% TDOT vs. 39% Surrounding DOTs)
- I trust TDOT to make sound professional transportation decisions (62% TDOT vs. 45% Surrounding DOTs)
- TDOT is responsive to the concern of local communities (54% TDOT vs. 38% Surrounding DOTs)



How TDOT Compares to Other Departments of Transportation

Areas Where TDOT Performed BETTER than Surrounding DOTs. The areas where TDOT's ratings were significantly higher than Surrounding DOTs included:

- Compared to other states I have visited, Tennessee's transportation system is one of the best
- TDOT incorporates environmental concerns in design/maintenance of projects
- TDOT does a good job prioritizing highway improvements
- Removing snow and ice from highways
- Keeping rest areas clean
- I trust TDOT to make sound professional transportation decisions
- TDOT is responsive to local communities
- Removing debris from highways
- Picking up litter and trash along highways
- Providing rest areas and welcome centers
- Providing incident clearance/motorist services
- Keeping shoulders on highways in good condition
- Feel safe driving through work zones during day
- I feel safe traveling on Tennessee highways
- I think TDOT adequately supports local transportation projects for the city and county governments
- Keeping other state highways in good condition
- TDOT quickly responds to incidents/roadway obstructions
- Keeping Interstate highways in good condition
- I am familiar with the services TDOT provides
- Feel safe driving through work zones at night
- Minimizing congestion on highways in rural areas
- Keeping guardrails in good condition
- TDOT does a good job of minimizing delays from construction/maintenance
- TDOT does a good job of clearing incidents to minimize delays
- Ensuring roadway striping is visible during DAY
- Location of warning signs give advance notice
- Keeping bridges in good condition
- Ensuring water drains quickly from highways

Areas Where TDOT Performed WORSE than Surrounding DOTs. The areas where TDOT's ratings were significantly lower than Surrounding DOTs' ratings included:

- Providing park and ride facilities
- Availability of public transportation services
- Proximity to public transportation services
- Frequency of public transportation services
- Pedestrian facilities/sidewalks along highways
- Biking facilities and lanes along highways
- Public transportation for elderly and disabled

Conclusions

Based on the results of the survey and the analysis that was completed as part of this study, the following conclusions were reached:

- TDOT is definitely moving in the right direction.
- TDOT is cultivating a very positive brand as an organization that can be trusted to deliver quality services and serve as a good steward of resources.
- Maintaining existing highways was the top priority throughout the State among all three groups that were surveyed. Other high priorities included: relieving congestion and expanding public transportation services.
- Although TDOT is outperforming other states with the delivery of highway-related services, TDOT is lagging significantly behind other states in non-highway related transportation services, such as public transportation and pedestrian/biking facilities along highways. This is one of the reasons public transportation services were identified as a high priority.
- Decreased levels of satisfaction in key areas, such as the condition of Interstates and bridges, suggest that Tennessee cannot sustain current levels of satisfaction in the future without additional investment. Since support for additional transportation funding has increased significantly since 2006, the State of Tennessee should consider finding additional sources of funding to ensure the State's transportation system continues to meet the needs of its residents.